CLAIMS

1 1. A system for enhancing price discovery in electronic commerce, wherein said system

2 comprises:

3 one or more automated surveyors for surveying any of: posted prices, bid prices, posted

4 quotes, quoted prices, and auctions;

5 an anonymous buyer profile, said anonymous buyer profile representing a sophisticated buyer

6 and included within at least one of said one or more automated surveyors, and

7 wherein use of said anonymous buyer profile increases the probability of discovering the best

8 prices in an electronic commerce environment which includes electronic price

9 discrimination.

2. A system for enhancing price discovery in electronic commerce, as per claim 1, wherein said
anonymous buyer profile is used multiple times to develop a historical usage therefor.

3. A system for enhancing price discovery in electronic commerce, as per claim 2, wherein said
developed anonymous buyer profile is used to make actual purchases for a buyer using said
system.

1   4.   A system for enhancing price discovery in electronic commerce, as per claim 3, wherein

2   when said system makes actual purchases for a buyer it further includes: receiving purchased

3   at least one item at a site owned by system operator or a third party, and

4   shipping at least item to said buyer.

1   5.   A system for enhancing price discovery in electronic commerce, as per claim 1, wherein said

2   surveying posted prices further comprises:

3   collecting information about wholesale prices;

       generating reference points, and

       assessing from said reference points whether a posted price is reasonable.

   6.   A system for enhancing price discovery in electronic commerce, as per claim 1, wherein said

       surveying posted quotes further comprises:

       scanning continuously commercial sites on a network;

       extracting posted quotes from said sites;

5   maintaining a database of posted quotes, and

6   pointing a buyer to vendors that post a best price based on said posted quotes for an item the

7   buyer is interested in.

1   7.   A system for enhancing price discovery in electronic commerce, as per claim 1, wherein said

2   included within at least one of said one or more automated surveyors comprises:

3   choosing one of a plurality of available fictitious names;

4   requesting price quotes on behalf of said chosen fictitious names;

5   storing all received quotes, and

6   maintaining statistics about said stored received quotes for reference to future buyers using

7   said system.

    8.   A system for enhancing price discovery in electronic commerce, as per claim 1, wherein said

        system further comprises:

        promoting competition among sellers by:

        generating messages to inform sellers of lower prices quoted by their competitors;

        advising said sellers to consider lowering prices, and

        maintaining a website, for public viewing, regarding ratings of sellers.

1   9.   A system for enhancing price discovery in electronic commerce, as per claim 1, wherein

2   potential buyers receive messages of prices discovered by any of: e-mail, regular mail, or

3   faxes.

1   10.   A system for enhancing price discovery in electronic commerce, as per claim 1, wherein said

2   method of uncovering price structures further comprises:

3   probing a commercial site with varying parameters associated with the price of at least one

4   product;

5   uncovering the underlying fee structure and how it varies with respect to different

6   parameters, and

7   suggesting to a potential buyer what parameters can be changed to save money.

11.   A system for enhancing price discovery in electronic commerce, as per claim 1, wherein said

         network includes any of the: Internet, WWW, wireless web, LAN or WAN.

12.   A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, wherein said method

         comprises:

         electronically presenting information to sellers located across a network about sophisticated

         buyers who are not willing to pay more than a minimum price;

5   using said sophisticated buyers to electronically gather information about prices on a

6   network, and

7   indicating to sellers when they are competitive, and influencing them to lower prices.

1   13.   A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, as per claim 12,

2   wherein said influencing them to lower prices comprises any of:

3   generating messages to inform sellers of lower prices quoted by their competitors;

4   advising said sellers to consider lowering prices, and

5   maintaining a website, for public viewing, regarding ratings of sellers.

1   14.   A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, as per claim 12,

2   wherein said sophisticated buyers are used to anonymously make actual purchases for a buyer

            using said method.

   15.   A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, as per claim 14,

            wherein when said method anonymously makes actual purchases for a buyer it further

            includes: receiving purchased item(s) at a site owned by system operator or a third party, and

            shipping item(s) to said buyer.

1   16.   A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, according to claim 12,

2   wherein said network includes one of the: Internet, WWW, wireless web, LAN or WAN.

1   17.   A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, wherein said method

2   comprises:

3   surveying posted prices;

4   surveying posted quotes;

5   surveying quoted prices;

6   obtaining specific quotes;

7   protecting a buyers anonymity;

8   promoting competition among sellers, and

          maintaining a database for collecting feedback from customers.

   18.   A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, according to claim 17,

         wherein said method of surveying posted prices further comprises the steps of:

         collecting information about wholesale prices;

         generating reference points, and

         assessing from said reference points whether a posted price is reasonable.

1   19.   A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, according to claim 17,

2   wherein said method of surveying posted quotes further comprises the steps of:

3   scanning continuously commercial sites on a network;

4   extracting posted quotes from said sites;

5   maintaining a database of posted quotes, and

6   pointing a buyer to vendors that post a best price based on said posted quotes for an item the

7   buyer is interested in.

   20.   A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, according to claim 17,

         wherein said network comprises one of the: Internet, WWW, wireless web, LAN, or WAN.

   21.   A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, according to claim 17,

         wherein said method of surveying quoted prices further comprises of the steps of:

         scanning continuously commercial sites on a network;

         generating fictitious user names;

5   requesting price quotes using said fictitious names;

6   building reputation of said fictitious name as sophisticated buyers;

7   generating statistical distribution of quotes, and

8   comparing a quote a buyer receives to what has been observed in the system.

1   22.   A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, according to claim 17,

2   wherein said method of obtaining specific quotes further comprises the steps of:

3   concealing a buyers true identity;

4   picking one of many available fictitious names;

5   requesting price quotes on behalf of the buyer without revealing the buyer's true identity;

6   storing all received quotes, and

7   maintaining statistics about said stored received quotes for reference of future buyers.

23.   A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, according to claim 17,

wherein said method of protecting a buyers anonymity further comprises the steps of:

providing buyer the option of purchasing item(s) for him;

purchasing the item(s) using one of many available fictitious names;

receiving item(s) at a site owned by system operator, and

shipping item(s) to buyer.

1   24.   A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, according to claim 17,

2   wherein said method of promoting competition among sellers further comprises the steps of:

3   generating messages to inform sellers of lower prices quoted by their competitors;

4   advising said sellers to consider lowering prices, and

5   maintaining a website, for public viewing, regarding ratings of sellers.

1 25. A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, according to claim 24,

2 wherein said messages generated include one of the following: e-mail, regular mail, or faxes.

1 26. A method for enhancing buyers performance in electronic commerce, according to claim 17,

2 further comprising a method of uncovering price structures by:

3 probing a commercial site with varying parameters associated with the price of at least one

4 product;

5 uncovering the underlying fee structure and how it varies with respect to different

6 parameters, and

7 suggesting to the buyer what parameters can be changed to save money.

1   27.   An article of manufacture comprising a computer user medium having computer readable

2   program code embodied therein which enhances buyers performance in electronic commerce,

3   said system comprising:

4   computer readable code comprising one or more automated surveyors for surveying any of:

5   posted prices, bid prices, posted quotes, quoted prices, and auctions;

6   computer readable code comprising one or more anonymous buyer profiles, said anonymous

7   buyer profile representing a sophisticated buyer and included within at least one of said one

8   or more automated surveyors, and

     wherein use of said anonymous buyer profile increases the probability of discovering the best

10   prices in an electronic commerce environment which includes electronic price

11   discrimination.

   28.   An article of manufacture comprising a computer user medium having computer readable

     program code embodied therein which enhances buyers performance in electronic commerce,

     according to claim 27, wherein code for said automated surveyors using said one or more

4   anonymous buyer profiles further comprises computer code for:

5   concealing a buyers true identity;

6   picking one of many available fictitious names;

7   requesting price quotes on behalf of a buyer without revealing the buyer's true identity;

8   storing all received quotes, and

9   maintaining statistics about said stored received quotes for reference of future buyers.